

Femmes d'Esprit

CNR Honors Magazine / Fall 2003 / Issue 3



In Search of the American Scholar

Richelle Fiore

Kindred Spirits

Betsy & Megan Skrip

A Deep Breath?

Cindy Bastien

Blown Away!

The NCHC Conference in Chicago

*Leslie Paola Gonzalez
and Amy Gutierrez*

Sigh, a poem

Christina Simpson

Taking a Deep Breath



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

"I want copy in my e-mailbox by 9 p.m. tonight!" It is every editor's dream to get all the copy for the publication they are producing on time, by the deadline. It is a rare and distant reality. As the editor of *Femmes d'Esprit*, I made the rather large promise at the end of last semester (Spring 2003) to produce three issue of *Femmes* in Fall 2003. As I look back on the semester, I can smile, because I did it!

The most important piece with producing this publication is that I didn't do it alone. There are so many students and faculty whose contributions make the pages of *Femmes d'Esprit* so popular. I find with the publication of each issue, more College Community members want to eagerly read the magazine.

Femmes d'Esprit has been published three times this semester, a great accomplishment. Each issue, the talents of Honors Students and Faculty met to produce a magazine that truly celebrates the knowledge and wisdom that CNR stands by and for.

The first issue of *Femmes*, entitled "Continuing the Journey," concentrated on welcoming the new year and new faces. The second issue, entitled "Defining Centennial," took a deeper look at what traditions, anniversaries, and centennials are all about. The heritage of CNR, as well as the Honors Program, was examined in the first of two Centennial editions. The second Centennial *Femmes* will be published as the second issue next semester.

This final issue of *Femmes* brings the Honors Program full circle to the end of the semester. Can you believe how fast it has come? As editor, it has been a difficult and rewarding experience producing this publication. No one person could possibly make *Femmes d'Esprit* the magazine it is alone. I have found that with

each issue, *Femmes*, only becomes greater and greater.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to *Femmes*, past and present. Your dedication, talent, and vision is undoubtedly what makes this magazine great.

Enjoy the third and final issue for the semester, "Taking a Deep Breath." Finish your final papers and exams, go home, then sit and read. You will, again, be amazed at the content of this issue. The semester is gone and January provides a month's break before we return for the spring. Take the time to take that deep breath, to relax, and come back refreshed and rested. May you get home safely and enjoy the holiday season with those closest to you.

As I reflect on the semester, I must say that producing publications, especially *Femmes*, is my favorite thing to do at CNR. Sure, it's a lot of long hours in front of the computer, typing, editing, and laying out, but the end result is most rewarding. I love being able to pass to you your copy of *Femmes* and watch as you read it, taking in the knowledge and talents that those who wrote and contributed worked so hard on. *Femmes* is a forum for your thoughts and hard work. Come. Write. Contribute.

A small tip and favor before I leave you to read this edition. If you want a jump start on next semester's issues of *Femmes*, just e-mail at femmesdesprit@yahoo.com. I'll be sure you have an assignment in no time and maybe we can all meet our deadlines a little early! Thank you for a rewarding semester.

Sincerely,
Kathryn M. Tyranski

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dr. Amy Bass

Time, according to Mick Jaggar, is on my side. Jaggar, of course, was neither a professor nor a college student. If he was, then he would know that time simply ceases to exist toward the end of any given semester.

For faculty, the end of a semester means scuttling about trying to grade hills of papers and exams. For students, it means producing said papers and exams.

And all, of course, while engaging in the high spirits of December.

December is perhaps our most diverse month, a vivid demonstration of just how many different kinds of folks we live with. Imagine the responsibility of public school systems this time of year, with so many things to acknowledge in December. Charged by the Constitution to never endorse religious life over the secular or one faith over another, the population of the United States demands that if holidays are going to be recognized, an increasingly diverse set of events must accompany.

In *Clever v. Cherry Hill Township Board of Education* (1993), the Supreme Court warned that public schools could teach but not observe religious

holidays, being careful not to cross the line between "the laudable educational goal of promoting a student's knowledge of and appreciation for this nation's cultural and religious diversity, and the impermissible endorsement of religion forbidden by the Establishment Clause." Teachers, as specified by the *Clever* case, must not embrace a single holiday, but instead teach students of many traditions. How daunting a task is this? Let's take a walk with the usual suspects:

Kwanzaa, a seven-day Pan-African festival enjoyed throughout the world, began in 1966 as part of the Black Nationalist push to regenerate African traditions. A cultural holiday, rather than a solely religious one, Kwanzaa celebrates family, community, and heritage, with origins in ancient African harvest, or "first fruits," celebrations. It does so via the reinforcement of the *Nguzo Saba*, or seven principles, which include self-determination, creativity, co-operative economics, and faith.

Founded in 1966, one might say? How traditional is that? Well....some holiday traditions simply aren't as old as we think.

December 25th emerged as the date for Christmas in the fourth century, when the church attempted to Christianize and take control of midwinter pagan feasting rituals that usually followed the harvest. Because the crops were in, it tended to be a time of drinking and merriment, as there was little to do in the fields. Through time, the frivolity – and debauchery – swelled to such degrees that it was banned by many. The Massachusetts Bay Colony, for example, so feared the revelry of December 25th that it outlawed Christmas celebrations and closed churches for the day, hoping to avert the bar brawls altogether. Grinches, indeed. It wasn't until the 1820s, in our beloved New York City, that the increasing consumer interests of Victorian America combined with Progressive reform movements to produce the celebration we all know: a time of family, charity, and shopping – the perfect holiday for a society experiencing both the fruits and vices of industrialization.

While these Christmas traditions might be relatively recent, others are not. Far older than Christmas customs are the origins of Bodhi



“December is perhaps our most diverse month, a vivid demonstration of just how many different kinds of folks we live with.”

Day, December 8th, designed to honor the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama. It is the ancient teachings of Gautama, the first Buddha, upon which Buddhism is founded. Buddhists observe his transformation through prayer, meditation, and teachings, but in the United States, many incorporate it with Christmas traditions, such as decorating ficus trees with shiny bulbs to represent the jewels of Buddhism or stringing lights around their homes to represent enlightenment.

Lights, of course, also play a key role in Chanukah – the Festival of Lights. Chanukah begins on the 25th day of Kislev on the Jewish calendar, but moves between November and December on the Western calendar. Designed to celebrate the victory of the Maccabees and the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple and commemorate the miracle of the oil that burned for 8 days, Chanukah has slowly became part of the Victorian consumer juggernaut of December, with a focus on decorations and gift giving.

Many find the glue to such December days to be winter solstice, as most winter holi-

days are linked in some way to it. During solstice, daytime hours are few and nighttime hours are many (except in the southern hemisphere, of course, where the opposite is true and summer solstice is celebrated). In ancient Greece, winter solstice was called Lenaia, the Festival of the Wild Women, while Persians still observe Shabe-Yalda. Ancient Incans celebrated Inti Raymi, or the Festival of the Sun, until Catholic conquistadores in the 16th century banned it, but a group of Quechua Indians in Cusco, Peru, revived the party in 1950.

Ramadan, however, the holiest of Islamic observances, does not, contrary to popular belief, revolve around solstice. Designed to honor the lunar month in which Allah revealed the Koran to humans, it is only in recent years that it has fallen during December. Bill of Rights Day, December 15th, also has nothing to do with solstice, but rather was signed into being by Franklin Delano Roosevelt on the 150th anniversary of the document. Bath-tub Party Day (12/5), The Lizard King's Birthday (12/8), Weary Willie Day (12/9), Human Rights Day (12/10), Na-

tional Children's Memorial Day (12/14), Jane Austen's Birthday (12/16), Underdog Day (12/19), Humbug Day (12/21), Feast of the Radishes (12/23), and Boxing Day (12/26) also have seemingly little to do with solstice.

What is missing, of course, is “Do-You-Have-Any-Idea-How-Busy-Students-and-Professors-Are Day.” So we will just have to dedicate the next several days to this new holiday. To celebrate, please engage in the following: budget your time; spread your energy wisely; make lists and check them twice, three times, as many as it takes to complete them; say “NO” (politely) when you can; exercise (and yes, shopping is exercise for those who do it correctly); bake cookies; see a movie; do a good turn; stay flexible; work your head off; ponder your accomplishments; eat dinner with a friend; browse the web for sunny vacation sites; reflect on your year; and reward yourself early and often. And if you have time, please tell me what Feast of the Radishes is.

A DEEP BREATH?

Cindy Bastien

So, finals are around the corner and projects and papers have to be done at the last minute. Yup, I know. We're all stressed. But there's hope! And it's so simple...just take a deep breath. 'A deep breath?' I hear one mumbling... so cliché. But have we ever taken the time to find out what really happens when we take a deep breath? Sit back and let those dendrites tingle a bit, as I take you into the world of the science of breathing.

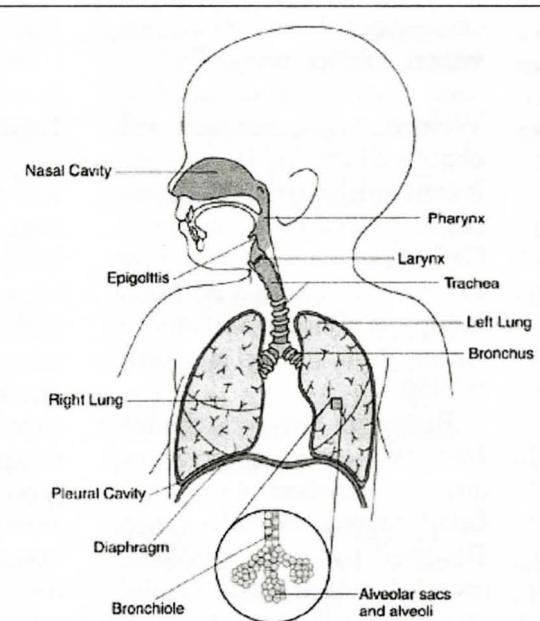
First off, some background information. We all know that our lungs are major organs used to breathe, at least for us humans. The lungs are suspended in the thoracic cavity. On the sides of them you'll find your ribs and on the bottom, the diaphragm. When we inhale or breathe in, our ribs rise and our diaphragm lowers to increase the volume of the thoracic cavity. As a result of this, the pressure in the lungs decreases, and air is drawn into the lungs. The opposite happens when we exhale or breathe out—the ribs press in closer to the lungs and the diaphragm rises, thereby decreasing the volume of the thorax (thoracic cavity): The pressure in the lungs increases and air is expelled from the lungs.

But what happens when we take a deep breath? Well, when we breathe deeply, the diaphragm moves farther down into the abdomen,

and our lungs expand more, ensuring that more oxygen is taken in and more carbon dioxide released. In this process, our breath rates slow down. Remember, a slow breath rate is always good. Our body knows that, that's why we go to sleep! Our breathing slows down when we are asleep and we thereby get rest. So whenever you feel the adrenaline rushing, take a moment and slow down your breath rate. Remember, it's good for you!

And since we use not only the respiratory muscles of our chest, but also those of the belly, ribcage, and lower back in rhythmic motions it is the belief that those motions, help to "massage" and detoxify our internal organs. The rhythmical pumping involved in deep breathing also helps turn on our "relaxation response," or parasympathetic nervous system. Deep breaths call relaxation. Unbelievable right? Not really, especially since it's the basis of meditation practices and exercise practices like Yoga.

So, the conclusion? Our breathing works with our nerves to help reduce stress! The deeper our breaths, the better! Just letting y'all know!



The respiratory system is the biological system of the human that allows us to take that deep breath we all need!

Clipart: http://www.chkd.com/respiratory/anatomy_rm.asp

BLOWN AWAY: THE NCHC CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO

Leslie Paola Gonzalez and Amy Gutierrez

As the day approached to depart for Chicago, the anticipation and excitement seemed to build more and more with each passing moment. We were going to be able to experience the excitement of the "Windy City," Chicago, while taking part of the 38th Annual Conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council, "Finding Common Ground". The realization of meeting students who were going through similar types of seminars brought up mixed emotions. Would we be on their academic level? Would they be on ours? We were excited to have been given the opportunity to present the collective ideas based on the seminar we had taken part in last semester. But little did we know that this idea would be the root of controversy.



Photo: http://txpc6.final.gov/~slee/photo/chicago/Chicago_River_2.jpg

The Windy City.

It's not until you leave New York that you realize how lucky you are to be able to experience the diversity around you. When we got to the conference, we spoke to other participants about our topic, "Psychology and Religion." We started off our discussion by explaining that CNR is a traditionally Catholic college, and describing the relationship between psychology and religion through the various philosophers that we studied. By explaining the theories of James, Freud, Allport, Maslow, and Fromm we were able to express that their ideas were universally applicable in terms of religion rather than closing in on one.

It was amazing to hear other's comments as we recounted the experience we had, for example, visiting a synagogue. They expressed to us how fortunate we were to be able to partake in such an in-depth endeavor. For many of them, it would be impossible to hold a class that discusses religion as a question because they do not

have that diversity. If they were to study a different religion, it would be impossible for them to have a first hand experience. One student actually expressed to us that the nearest worship place outside of his own faith was more than an hour and a half away. He was not the only one to tell us such a thing; many others approached us, asking if anyone was ever opposed to such a class. They asked how we ever got permission from the Dean. They could not envision the fact that we had been studying not only one religion, but the concept of religion all together and actually partaking in a ceremony of a faith outside of our own.

What was even more amazing was hearing the story of one biology teacher that talked to us about the difficulty she was having teaching Darwin's theory of evolution. This has been her most problematic topic for the simple reason that the parents of the community are firm believers in their faith and do not want it challenged. When she lectures on Darwin's theory, the parents feel as though she is imposing her beliefs on their children. The situation has reached the point where she

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NCHC IN CHICAGO:

THE PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Stephen O'Rourke

I recently attended the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) annual meeting in Chicago, along with two students from the CNR Honors Program (Amy Gutierrez and Leslie Gonzalez). The theme of this year's conference was "Finding Common Ground." I defy you to come up with a theme that could be broader, more inclusive, and less specific. Perhaps next year's convention will be centered around the topic "Oh, Those Humans" or maybe "The Benefits of Thinking." But as usual, I digress.

Amy, Leslie, and I gave a breakfast presentation about our Spring 2003 Honors Seminar in Psychology and Religion. In particular, there was one element of the class that particularly lent itself to the theme of "Finding Common Ground." I arranged for Rabbi Bernstein from Beth-El Synagogue Center in New Rochelle to come to our class as a guest speaker. He very generously spent two hours with us, answering our questions about the beliefs and traditions of Conservative Judaism and telling us in detail about the elements of their worship service. Two weeks later, we accepted his invitation to attend Shabbat services. The students wrote papers linking the psychological theories and research we were covering in class with the events and experiences we had at Beth-El Synagogue Center. Our presentation at NCHC was on this particular assignment.

The Scottish poet Burns wrote, "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley." In other words, you can organize, prioritize, and strategize all you like. It still doesn't mean that things will come out according to plan. Our preparations for NCHC did not go as smoothly as we had hoped. We had trouble scheduling times to meet and prepare for the presentation, we had difficulties determining who was going to be responsible for each task, we encountered

airport security delays, we had wake-up calls that didn't quite do the job, etc. But once we got it all together, the presentation went quite well. Some very friendly and fascinating people took the time to stop and talk with us about our work, helping us forget about the obstacles and headaches of preparation.

Upon returning to CNR, I was asked to write a short piece about NCHC for *Femmes d'Esprit*. My first thought was "I'm all 'Psychology and Religion-ed' out." I had just spent the last two or three weeks re-reading, re-writing, and re-thinking that topic. But as I thought back over my experience at NCHC, I realized I did have something to write about. Actually, what I'd really like to tell you about has nothing to do with the conference itself. It's about trying to do one small thing differently than you normally would and seeing the effect it has on others. It's about making a conscious effort to change how you interact with people and seeing how it makes you feel.

At every convention I've ever attended, I always try to do something outside the crush of scheduled events at that professional meeting. If you allow it to do so, a conference will take you to a fabulous new metropolitan area and then proceed to dominate your time to the point that you see absolutely none of sites and sounds of that fair city.

NCHC was no exception. On every day, there were talks, presentations, luncheons, governmental activities,



Photo: <http://www.sunflower.com/~cjones/>



and all manner of student-faculty events scheduled from sun-up to well into the night. This was my first visit to Chicago. I don't know when I'll have the chance to get back and I wanted to meet more of the town than just the hotel and conference rooms.

One thing that I wanted to do before leaving was to eat dinner at a fine Chicago restaurant. The night before we were to fly home, I realized the clock was ticking on that opportunity. So after a wonderful presentation by Dr. Sally Boysen (a leading researcher on chimpanzee cognition and intelligence), I left the hotel and started walking uptown. In the River North area of the city, you'll find Frontera Grill and Topolobampo, two restaurants owned and operated by celebrity chef, Rick Bayless. That was where I wanted to go. I was on my own that night and the words "table for one" just sounded terribly tragic. But because I really wanted to eat there, I decided to brave it.

As the wait for a table was going to be an hour and a half, the simple solution to my dilemma was to try to get a seat at the bar and order from the menu there. While waiting, I ordered a drink and walked around in crowd of foreign faces. Now, I'd like to think that I'm a fairly sociable person, but the fact is that it's easy to be outgoing and gregarious when you already know and like the people you are with. This was a horse of a different color. Being absolutely honest with myself (and apparently with all of you, as this essay has taken on a confessional tone), I very quickly turn from an extravert into wallflower when the company is new

and unknown. Sure, I can talk to strangers, but it's typically a rather strained conversation of pleasantries and idle chatter. That's not a lot to rely on while you very possibly might have hours to kill before the first sight of seviche.

In "get-to-know-you" conversations such as these, there's oftentimes a point where I think to myself, "We seem to be hitting the wall here." When a conversation with a new acquaintance becomes labored and awkward, I'm frequently tempted to excuse myself with a polite, "Well, it's been very nice talking with you." But on this night, I wondered if I had to follow that same pattern. It's the person I've been for a long time, but did it have to be the pattern I would continue to follow? What would happen if I worked a bit harder at the conversation and just asked two more questions than I normally would have? I decided to try doing just that. I made a willful choice to not be that same person. I decided to be a slightly different self.

I know this must sound like a minor episode in the grand scheme of a person's life experiences, but I was quite struck by how different the environment became when I changed my own actions and outlook. I spent 30 minutes talking with a married couple from Kentucky (a vice president for institutional advancement at a liberal arts college and a stay-at-home Mom for their three kids). I talked for another half an hour with a woman and her two daughters from Kansas. They were in Chicago school-shopping for the younger daughter who will be starting college next fall. Conversational cul de sacs became wide-open thoroughfares. It may sound simplistic and naïve, but I think I became more interesting to others when I showed more interest in others.

All of a sudden, what had been taxing in my previous experience became quite free, easy, and fulfilling. Asking a couple extra questions of people led to meaningful

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IN SEARCH OF THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

Richelle Fiore

Amy: "I thought you were a doctor."

Rachel: "Yeah, no. Ross has a PhD."

Amy: "Ew!" (1)

- Friends

.....

My youngest brother Ben is a junior at Enrico Fermi High School, enrolled in many of the same classes that I was five years ago. Our lives at times paralleled the others, as we even have had some of the same teachers. Yet, our educational experiences remain vastly different. In tenth grade, I read John Knowles' *A Separate Peace* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Ben read Nicholas Sparks' *A Walk to Remember* and Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*. Especially in high school English classes, the question of Canon must come under discussion. For John Guillory in "Canon," the classic texts we imagine, *Moby Dick* and Edgar Allan Poe, are canonical texts. However, the designation into the canon is not immediate, for the texts must withstand time. The writing must become timeless (2).

After three years, Shakespeare is still some old dead guy who wrote the screenplay to that Leonardo DiCaprio movie, who wrote the monologue he helped me memorize in the 9th grade. Ben has yet to read one of Shakespeare's texts. When at Fermi, the focus of my English classes were for my classmates and me to have a foundation in the classics, the Canon, in addition developing our analytical skills. I read Thomas Hardy, Emily Brontë, James Joyce, Toni Morrison, and Albert Camus in addition to the theoretical texts of Paulo Freire and Walker Percy. The focus of Ben's classes are pages read, not content. Once he completed



Photo: www.nbc.com/Friends/index.html

Friends is a prime time wonder on NBC.

reading Michael Crichton's latest potboiler, he read a cookbook (100 pages) before scouring my bookshelves to find Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. He chose it for length and ended up enjoying the story, completely in opposition to his original intentions. A history buff with aspirations to teach the subject as a profession, he recently purchased a copy of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. It was not the desire to read something outside of his assigned schoolwork that made my mother drive him to Barnes and Noble, it was the persuasive argument that AJ Soprano recently had read it with the same Penguin Classics cover.

I received a decent high school education from a liberal arts high school. My English classes were not simple surveys of moldy transcendental poetry. We also took topic specific classes where we discussed the individual's role in society as represented in literature, reading *Reviving Ophelia*, *Brave New World*, and *Slaughterhouse Five*. The texts broadened our understanding of literature and social theory, contextualized and discussed. Links to previously read literature, W.H. Auden's "Unknown Citizen" and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, were demanded. I had read certain aspects of the Canon, had some understanding of the works, and could analyze an argument. Such skills, I was told in Freshmen Orientation and my orientation to the Honors Program, were the building blocks of a liberal education. I seemed prepared and was able to capitalize

and receive good grades and gain a valuable education in various areas, including literature, philosophy, theory, gender studies, popular culture. I have been successful academically and look forward to continuing such studies in graduate school. However, I recently took the GREs and did not score as well as I had hoped, or honestly, in the range the schools I had been considering demanded. This does not fill me with ease. Did I have a poor testing day? Probably, but I also have a long-standing history of scoring only adequately at best on standardized tests. I've been tested since third grade. Once a year until eighth grade, I took the Connecticut Mastery tests or a practice version of it. My freshman and sophomore years of high school I took the CAPT test (the equivalent to the NY Regents), with weeks devoted to practice. The goal, for me and the other students, to pass or even score well, was to increase the school's funding, and to be able to spend three weeks in May sleeping past 6 a.m. our junior and senior years. Junior and senior year, the SATs awaited me.

Tests seem to be the most critical moment of education. It is the quantitative evidence to measure a student's learning, no? President George W. Bush campaigned on the promise of "no child left behind," insisting that the fulfillment of such educational promises be measured by standardized tests. Under the "No child left behind" act signed into law by Bush on January 8, 2002, school districts and states are to be held accountable for falling and failing test scores with federal funding and aid (3). More so than ever before, public schools must produce results on standardized tests, a system that has been revealed to be ripe with gender, ethnic, and educational biases in the very way the test is constructed (4). Despite such revela-

tions, tests are still used and students still fail. For schools, the answer is clear—teach to the test. Curriculums are shaped in relation to potential test questions instead of the needs of the students. Learning no longer is the emphasis of education, results are.

If high schools fail to give students the most basic elements of education, what can one learn at college? Everything? Is four years enough accomplish such a feat? Even when a student chooses to attend a traditionally-structured liberal arts college or university, what are they learning? When sitting down to plan a syllabus, an educator has many factors to consider. What materials, included, but not limited to, essays, articles, novels, poetry, films, will best explicate the themes and topics of the course? What canonical building-blocks do students have in their possession? The nation's political and ideological climate also demands more often than not that a professor consider the identity positions of the students in the class and how each student will react to the material. Since the civil rights and women's movements of the late 1960s, the condition of once marginalized classes of people has been taken under discussion. Does an African-American man think and respond differently than an Indian immigrant woman, and are these ethnic identities even primary formations?

The academic drive of 1970s multiculturalism was to engage such identities with literary representations. Multiculturalism was to find different voices, long-silenced and ignored in the literary world in the past, discovered and introduced to the market. Feminist scholars "rediscovered" Virginia Woolf in the 1970s and she became a canonical author. Women of color, Alice Walker, Sandra Cisneros, Isabel Allende, were published and lauded. Gabriel García

Continued on the next page...

Márquez (in 1982) and Toni Morrison (in 1993) each won the Nobel Prizes in literature, the first Latin American author and the first African American author to do so. Out of a politically-motivated moment in literary studies, new voices that may have been ignored or not very widely read were discovered. When Márquez won the Nobel Prize for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, he was immediately translated and published across the world. His celebrity paved the way for Allende's breakthrough best-seller *The House of the Spirits*, to be simultaneously published in several European and Asian markets.

The ethics of the multiculturalism demanded cross-cultural engagement. New voices, new topics are considered in relation to my thoughts and ideas. Literature is never static, but always in communication with the reader and the past. Allende's *House of the Spirits* speaks to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, in addition to Greek myths. However, did the relentless need to find new talent, to sell, voice a specific identity, be it Asian, gay, Eskimo, Native American, slave or any other subject position, lessen the importance of ethical and aesthetic statements? Have these novels, memoirs, poems, and prose lost the very qualities expected in a canonical text? Is this perceived loss of aesthetic value an inevitable by-product of multicultural canon formation.

In his address "The American Scholar" to Phi Beta Kappa students at Harvard, Ralph Waldo Emerson contemplates the nature of a scholar, thinker, writer. Fearing the brightest minds will become stagnant in relation to the great ideas of the past, Emerson urges that in

"each age, [...] must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this." (5) One must challenge himself/herself in relation knowledge as a way to further their mind, yet it seems that contemporary culture may have misread Emerson's urging.

If current pedagogy demands identificatory structures that only allow for metonymic (like for like) responses to representations of the students' lived experienced (especially those experiences of race, class, and gender) as the only priority, can texts even survive? In fifty years, will an understanding of 2003 American life disappear, despite the existence of Madonna's most recent album? Canonical literature isn't a mirror to culture, it is an interrogation.

While Ben accidentally discovered he enjoyed Dickens, he hasn't picked up a copy of *Bleak House* or *A Tale of Two Cities*, or anything else really. Has culture reached the moment that validates revered literary critic Harold Bloom's fear,

that "to teach [Thomas Mann's] *Death in Venice* or *Disorder and Early Sorrow* to most current undergraduates, even the gifted, is nearly impossible"? Are we raising a generation who cannot read the canon? Will literature wither like Classics (Latin and Greek studies), and require specialized skills to comprehend and study them a terrible?

The Friends joke in the epigram represents the current feelings about higher education—it is a joke. The thought of obtaining the highest degree, teaching at an undergraduate institution, is greeted with an "ew."

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Ralph Waldo Emerson
Photo: <http://www.sc.edu/usetimes/>

EVERY DAMN DAY

Alana Ruptak

A professor once asked "How many times are you re-born?" The answer leapt from my lips before my syntax even had a moment to hesitate, "Every damn day." Laughter from both professor and other students filled the air; but how true that statement is. As the end of the semester leers at us from behind a cloud of deadlines and last minute things to do, it conjures up the anticipation of an ending. It is amazing to me how much can transpire within a given amount of time.

Let us take a semester. The proposed dates are early September until mid-December. As we start, our mind is sent spinning into the land of fantasy of the "what will," the "what can," and the "what should" happen. In our imagination, we speak conversations and attend events that even have yet to be announced. We know what moments will we smile and we deny the moments that think we might cry. Onto the blank pages of our mind we write out our life as if we are living it within one thought. From one stationary position we attend classes, visit friends, dance in the rain, and sleep with our lovers. We open our eyes with the books still on

our desk, our friends not knowing our names, the rain not yet fallen and our lovers waiting anxiously. So we push our bodies, our minds, our spirit into movement and we set out to make true the words we wrote.

How funny it is though. The hand of the clock turns and with each movement sends a wind that changes the path we so willingly set out for ourselves. We awake each morning with expectations and by the time we enter the atmosphere all we thought it would be, is not. No one ever learns our name and those who do pronounce it incorrectly. When we dance we

trip in puddles and our lovers, well, they always awake before we get to see their faces. The days we were destined to smile seem to decrease in number and quality. With each breath the colors of the leaves change and our rose colored glasses that we purchased for the journey are constantly being scratched. We walk along a tightrope, waiting to see in what direction we will fall or perhaps make it across to what we do not yet know.

But with each passing day, our expectations are either celebrated or mourned; celebrated for the life they gave us, as well as mourned for the one they dealt us. Never the same from second to second, the peace we gain from falling asleep cleanses our being, allowing us reincarnation from experience to experience, frame of mind to frame of mind, emotion to emotion, within one casing. Shedding skin and re-circulating blood, we are completely not who we were because of who we were. With each ending, a new beginning somehow seems to resurface.

Every damn day, a beginning and an end, a birth, a death and a rebirth...every damn day.

.....
*"We know what
moments will we
smile and we deny
the moments that
think we might cry."*

- Alana Ruptak
.....

FAMILY WEEKEND 2003



On November 8, 2003, the Saturday of Family Weekend, Honors students celebrated with their families achievements made at the College of New Rochelle.

The morning began with an Honors Convocation, honoring students who maintained a high grade point average throughout the past academic year. The Honors Freshmen were also honored in regard to the scholarships and awards they received in coming to the College of New Rochelle. A reception followed the convocation.



Later that afternoon, students from across campus gathered in Room C of the Student Campus Center to showcase talents in the fields of poetry and acting at the Lyric Café. The Lyric Café is a Family Weekend event made possible by CNR's literary magazine, *Phoenix*. Honors students participated by reading poetry they had written as well as performing pieces by playwrights from the ages.



Family Weekend provided many events that allowed the talent and drive of Honors Students to shine. Keep looking for more updates on the whereabouts of Honors students in the next issue of *Femmes*.



Counter Clockwise from top:
Richelle Fiore '04 reads at the Lyric Café; Betsy and Megan Skrip pose for a picture with their parents after the Honors Convocation; Maya Georgieva '04 has a talk with Dr. Anne McKernan; Sarah Murray '07 performs at the Lyric Café; Dr. Amy Bass, Kathryn Tyranski '06, and Dr. Cynthia Kraman smile at the reception after the Honors Convocation.

Photos: K. Tyranski

MEDEA

On Thursday, December 4th and Friday, December 5th, the Student Theatre Ensemble performed *Medea* by Euripides in Brescia Living Room. The play was directed by Claire Fu, a member of the Class of 2005 in the School of Arts and Sciences. The classic Greek tragedy involved the talent of several members of the Honors Program both on and off stage. Participants included:

Tara Devlin - Stage Crew: costume runner

Nisha Feliz - Acted as a Child

Richelle Fiore - Producer

Sarah Murray - Acted as Chorus Member and Princess

Amy Perry - Stage Crew: lighting, set, and sound

Jennifer Pinheiro - Classics Consultant

Christina Simpson - Acted as Creon

Alana Ruptak - Stage Crew: lighting, set, and sound

Kathryn Tyranski - Acted as the Tutor and Aegeas

Emily Williams - Acted as Medea

Sarah Worthington - Stage Crew: lighting, set, and sound

Samantha Young - Acted as Jason



Clockwise from top: Alana Ruptak '05 setting set pieces; Sarah Murray '07 (center) with Roxanna Murillo and Nicole Daviau in the Chorus; Samantha Young '05 and Emily Williams '05 playing Jason and Medea; Nisha Feliz '06 (right) with Samantha Sin playing the Children; Sarah Worthington '07 and Amy Perry '05 discuss lighting; Sarah Murray '07 and Christina Simpson '07 playing the Princess and Creon, King of Corinth; Samantha Young '05 and Emily Williams '05 playing Jason and Medea.

Photos: K. Tyranski

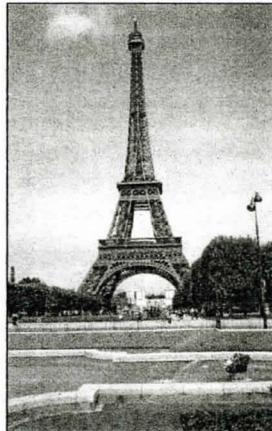
SHE'S GOT FRANCE ON HER MIND!

Emily D. Williams

Emily will be spending her spring semester in Paris, France studying French language and Fine Arts at the Université de Paris IV, Sorbonne through the American Institute for Foreign Study. While abroad, she will continue on the Honors Program track by working the second half of her Junior Seminar research, a project that will focus on a comparative analysis between modern American and French interpretation of the visual arts with Dr. André Beauzethier facilitating as mentor. She looks forward to the opportunity to extend her education and the Honors experience abroad, in the context of a different country and its culture.

10 years old. Sitting at a Viennese café in suburban New Jersey, my mom's face watches me curiously from across the marble tabletop...I can see animated question marks shuffling throughout her mind. It is mid-afternoon and I have only been a double-digit for a mere nine hours. The one and the zero dance in my head, stumbling a bit over one another's feet, not joining hands quite yet. My own clairvoyance is paralleled by my mother's; she seems to sense the unsteady movement that wanders in my brain, just as I can imagine her questions before she asks them. I awkwardly await her inquiries as she continues to study my face and its expressions. The silence is broken by two waiters, who jubilantly sing a melodic 'Happy Birthday' as they prance over to our table with an ice cream sundae. A birthday candle is lit aglow on top, and is about to collapse. Within a matter of seconds the tune is done, and the space between the candle and

me has become intimate. It beckons my wish before I extinguish its flame, quickly I make it and the orange, red heat of the fire transforms to a fragrant smoke that lingers in



The Eiffel Tower
Photo: Microsoft Clipart

my

nostrils. I cannot remember exactly what I wished for, but the instance immediately after remains vivid in my mind, ten years later. My mom's question has finished brewing, now ready to investigate. She once again looks at me with searching eyes and asks, "Emily, what would you most

like to do now that you are ten?" Without a moment's hesitation, I reply, "I want to go to France."

20 years old. I find myself in a familiar place. A different café this time, although the same face gazes at me from across the table, as we dine over breakfast. Though the passage of time has changed us both significantly, certain values and interests remain strong. The kinship of curiosity to explore and learn about different cultures and languages continues to weave its thread. A stack of study abroad catalogs doubles as an entrée, as mom and I examine the various offerings together and explore my interests, concerns and goals. Ten years have passed with incredible speed and I have evolved tremendously as a person. I revisit the past, and remember the instance of my tenth birthday. From a critical distance, I witness the profound impact that decision made towards shaping my life. That year, at the age of ten, I par-

ticipated in a three week intensive exchange program, hosting a French girl, Mélanie at my home in the states and then living with her family in a small village in France, southeast of Paris. I became engrossed with a curiosity to learn about other cultures, particularly that of France. I made it my priority to keep my connection and the passion strong. I hosted two different French students in my home, and continued to take French classes all throughout grammar and high school. In 2001, I got the chance to return to France, then eighteen years old, to visit the exchange students I maintained relationships with over the years. My family traveled with me, sharing in my ardent passion to explore the nuances of French culture and language. Though this trip was exhilarating, I felt frustrated by the lack of a more independent opportunity to acquaint myself with French culture in my own personal way. I yearn to experience this country on my own, without my family, so that I might be more challenged to speak French exclusively and immerse myself in the culture.

And so, here I am, eager to study abroad in France to

learn more about this fascinating culture and its people, and to gain fluency in the native tongue. The yearning to explore this enduring interest of mine is more passionate than ever. At this point in my life, and in the world's history, I feel it is critical to learn about self in relation to others, and especially those of different nationalities, and cultural backgrounds. My curiosity has evolved into an awareness

and backgrounds I encounter during my stay. In one simple exchange with another, a wealth of possibilities exists. Dialogue between the self and other, from culture to culture, and nation to nation, builds a unique relationship that informs one's life in profound ways that are not forgotten. I look forward to engaging in these different forms of dialogue during my studies abroad.

I foresee the intersection of fine arts and French language and culture, as a direct outgrowth of studying abroad, and enabling me with the skills, awareness, and passion to pursue the continuation of my studies in graduate school and eventually into shaping my career path. Ideally, I would like to combine my two passions of art and French into a profession that allows for the collaboration of both. I feel that France lends itself as the optimal site to investigate and develop my interests in depth, and simultaneously, in a way that my studies here in the states cannot. Through direct exposure and contact with the French landscape, culture and language, I believe that my growth as a human being, a student and citizen of the world will reach tremen-



Arc de Triomphe

Photo: Microsoft Clipart

and concern for the globally expanding world we live in today. As Americans, in the current climate of world conflict, it is imperative to extend beyond our boundaries, create relationships with other nations and their people. In studying abroad, I plan to make my contributions towards this goal by fostering meaningful relationships with those of different nationalities

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTMAS

Dr. Elisabeth Brinkmann

Since Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, has become a best-seller I have been asked more questions than I usually am about what is "really true" in the Bible and Christian Faith. Behind these questions I often detect either anxiety (if the story line of the novel is true, then what about my faith?) or glee (assuming that it is true, this confirms what I already suspected; Christianity is a myth at best, at worst, a hoax.) My response to both the anxious and the gleeful is that *The Da Vinci Code* is an enjoyable work of fiction. I hope you have a chance to read it over the semester break, which is why I am being intentionally vague about what exactly the story is. Yet even if it were factual, this would hardly change the most important truths of Christian faith. Having agreed to write something about Christmas for these pages of *Femmes*, let me use this Christian celebration to illustrate my point.

Two accounts of Jesus' birth exist in the New Testament, in the gospels of Matthew and Luke respectively. Each version is part of the larger story of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection written for a particular community of Christians facing particular questions of faith. Each author chose symbols and images that would make sense to his community to convey the truth of which the author was already convinced: that the person, Jesus, who had been put to death as a traitor by the Romans, was raised by God from the dead and was, in fact, the Messiah, or Savior, whose coming had been foretold by the Hebrew prophets. This, not a factual account of Jesus' birth, is the point of each gospel author's rendition of the nativity.

Matthew, writing for a community primarily of Jews who had come to believe that Jesus was



the Messiah, traces the roots of Jesus back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish faith (Matt 1:2 – 17). Luke, on the other hand, was writing for a community primarily of gentiles who had worshiped the Greek and Roman gods before coming to believe that Jesus was their Savior. Wanting to show that Jesus had common roots with these non-Jews, Luke traces Jesus' lineage all the way back to Adam, the father of all of humanity (Luke 3:23 – 38). Moreover, rather than using the Jewish title "messiah" for Jesus, Luke uses "savior," a title his audience would have been used to hearing applied to Greek and Roman gods, as well as to the Roman Emperor. Luke also uses imagery which his readers would have recognized from Greek and Roman mythology to tell the story of Jesus' birth. In this way he conveys that from the very beginning Jesus was no ordinary human being. Matthew, on the other hand, in his infancy account uses narrative details intended to evoke images from the Hebrew Scriptures. The flight of the Holy Family to Egypt and their later return, for example, would have reminded his Jewish-Christian readers of their ancestors' Exodus experience. In addition, many of the details Matthew includes in his version of the birth and infancy of Jesus are fulfillments of prophecies found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Both Matthew and Luke use their infancy narrative to set the stage for what they want to emphasize about Jesus' later life and mission. In Matthew's gospel, for example, the first people to visit Jesus are "wise men" bringing gifts symbolizing royalty (gold), worship (frankincense), and death (myrrh). Among other things, in other words, Matthew is preparing his readers for Jesus' eventual death and burial. Having

these wise men from the East (i.e. non-Jews) be the first to recognize Jesus as the Messiah also indicates to Matthew's readers that, though fulfilling the Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus is Messiah for the gentiles as well as well as the Jews. Luke's first visitors to Jesus, on the other hand, are poor shepherds, which is in keeping with Luke's emphasis on Jesus' special concern for the poor and other social out-casts.

While Luke and Matthew both wrote their gospels to address the faith questions of a particular community shaped by its particular historical circumstances, Christians throughout the centuries have interpreted and re-imagined these stories in light of their own circumstances and faith questions. For example, by the fourth century December 25 was established as the date of Jesus' birth. This date has no basis in the gospels (among other things, it is unlikely that shepherds would have kept their flocks outside overnight during the rainy season) and for the first three hundred years different Christian communities celebrated Christmas at different times of the year. The most probable explanation for December 25 becoming the date on which the church finally settled for Christmas is that it was also the date of the feast of the Roman sun god. Already known as the "Birthday of the Sun," December 25 would have been a natural choice for Christians to commemorate the birth of Christ, the one whom they also call the "Light of the World." Inevitably, once Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire some of the practices of other "pagan" religions that were found throughout the empire accrued to Christian celebrations of Christmas. (This is not much different to the inclusion, today, of certain "Christmas traditions" by some Jews in their celebrations of Hanukah). One of the most common "pagan" additions to the Christian

celebration of Christmas is the Christmas tree which has its origins in Germanic celebrations of the winter solstice. Yet even some of the Christmas traditions that appear to be based in the Christian scriptures are, in fact, late comers to the celebration. The traditional crèche, for example, was only introduced by St. Francis of Assisi in the 12th century. Most crèches (be sure to go see the ones on exhibit now in the Castle Gallery) conflate Matthew's and Luke's version of the Christmas story, placing both the wise men and the shepherds in the same scene. What is more, there are always three wise men, usually depicted as kings, yet Matthew makes no mention of how many men there were, let alone that they were kings. The ox and ass beside the manger, furthermore, have their origins not in the New Testament but in a (misinterpreted) passage from Isaiah.

What does all this have to do with *The Da Vinci Code*? Historical knowledge can serve to illuminate Christian faith and practice. This is why Christian theologians and biblical scholars work to uncover and understand the historical circumstances surrounding the life of Jesus and the Christian community. We understand today that some of the traditions surrounding Christmas are, in fact, extraneous to the truths that Christians believe and proclaim. To the extent that these traditions nourish Christians' faith, they shape the experience and expression of that faith. To the extent that they are distractions, they may deform expressions of Christian faith. They do not, however, change the faith experience of the first followers of Jesus, which led them to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. The same is true for the *Da Vinci Code*. Even if the story line were factual (which it is not), it could not change the truths Christians have come to know through their faith experiences.

KINDRED SPIRITS

Betsy and Megan Skrip

As the entire CNR community prepares to release a collective sigh of relief and return home or to the homes of close friends and relatives for the holidays and semester break, the importance of family ties becomes ever more apparent. For an entire three months, many of us have been somewhat mentally, if not also physically, isolated from our loved ones, devoted to our ever-demanding responsibilities and studies, and oftentimes very little else. Yet, final exams are dawning and the December light at the end of the academic tunnel is glowing ever brighter. Soon, we will find ourselves once more among those we hold dear, and may even discover that our absences have helped to expose new dimensions in our relationships.

Even though our familiar bonds may not be flawless (for whose ever really are?), we must take the time to appreciate and cherish them, for there can be no greater gift than family—however one's family is defined. One bond perhaps too often abused or taken for granted may be that between siblings, whose particular upbringings and personalities may incite them to argue, compete, and rebel against one another in their personal quests for identity. Indeed, sibling rivalry in today's society is overwhelmingly expected and encouraged, thereby often dividing individuals, who, together, could po-

tentially exert a tremendous force for initiating change within the world. Who could imagine wanting to separate the Kratt brothers, Venus and Serena Williams, or (although fictional characters) Frasier and Niles Krane?

When people ask us, "the Skrip sisters," what rooming together is like, we can honestly reply that it's simply like rooming with a best friend—a relationship for which we are both extremely grateful. William Rostler once wrote, "How rare and wonderful is that flash of a moment when we realize that we have discovered a friend." The same might be said for those brought together by some mysterious force, whether divinity, fate, or chance. A certain sense of confidence may be found in the company of a sympathetic close friend and sister—a person whose wavelengths of thought and emotions seem to flow remarkably coincidentally with one's own.

But, people argue, what about expanding your horizons, learning to live with another person whose different perceptions and lifestyle will undoubtedly in some way alter and broaden your own way of daily life? What about the possibility of forging a lifelong friendship with someone you might otherwise have never even met or had the time to thoroughly get to know? Our response: college, especially with the close-knit community of CNR, is not a closed-door experience limited to the confines of one's dorm room. Each day, campus life (including classes, club member



Little versions of Betsy and Megan.

Photo: Collection of M. Skrip



Megan and Betsy, sisters, living together at the College of New Rochelle.
Photo: Collection of M. Skrip

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THOUGHTS...

MY FIRST SEMESTER

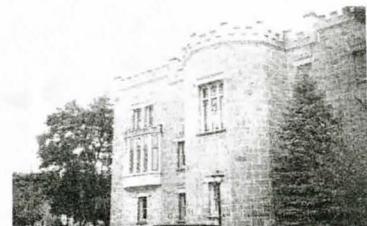
Sarah H. Murray

Finals are approaching, the due dates for research papers are forever nearing, and pretty soon we will be packing up many of our belongings to head back to home for January Intercession. As a freshman Honors student at the College of New Rochelle, I can honestly report that my first semester has flown by faster than I ever would have expected. When we freshman arrived, the first few weeks seemed a little awkward. There have been so many accomplishments: learning how to adjust to our roommate (if we had one), learning to take showers between the hours of 7 a.m. and 12 a.m., and learning to manage our own workload without the aid of parents to constantly remind us that it is never a good idea to go out on a school night.

In addition to those adjustments, we also needed to learn how to get along with people we never met before. Before coming to CNR, I had gone through all my schooling, twelve years, with the same group of people. For me, coming to college was starting all over again and I felt how most kindergarteners feel on the first day of school—nervous and excited all at once.

Throughout this semester, so many questions have passed through my mind. When at college, you start to question what you thought you knew and believed with what you believe to be the truth now. I also feel that I have grown in this first semester at CNR. Being able to deal with life's problems is a major part of growing up. Life is not fair, people you think are your friends sometimes aren't, and the person you never thought would be your friend ends up as your best friend. I never would have believed that I would have had the chance to be involved in so many different groups my first semester of college.

One of the best parts of going to small liberal arts women's college is that the students receive the opportunity to be active in many groups which expand our talents and interests. For example, I've participated in the productions of *Company*, *Medea*, and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. From my involvement in these shows, I've learned so much about myself and others. Every person's college experience is different, but I highly recommend that each of you get the most out of your four years at CNR.



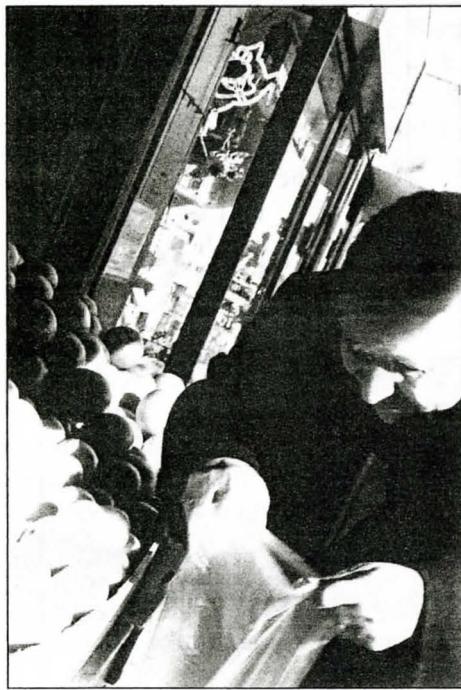
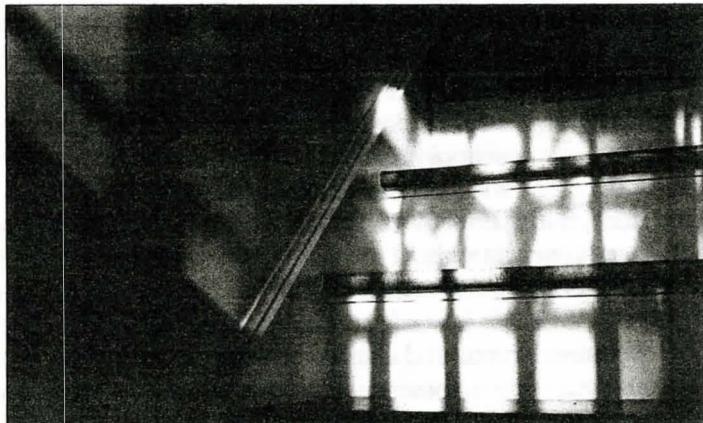
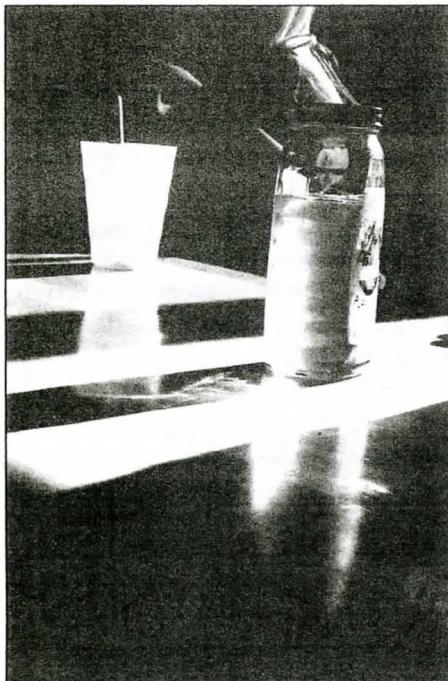
CENTENNIAL THOUGHT...

Nisha Feliz

This thought dawned on me one day and I can't help not sharing it with you!

Centennials do not really come around that often or you do not hear it said but it did come up during a regular conversation with my mother. My mom said, "You know that I have noticed that this is the second school you have gone to that celebrates its centennial." It's funny that I never really noticed the coincidence until now. I think I never noticed because I was too swept up in the festivities and never really sat down to think that some heavenly power has steered me into participating in a small moment of history. Who knows, maybe the graduate school of my choice might end up celebrating its centennial when I enroll!

CELEBRATING ART



*The photographs on this page were
taken by Honors Junior,
Emily D. Williams.*

CELEBRATING CREATIVITY

SIGH

Christina Simpson

Breathing continues out of boredom
Its main sensations derive from the excitement of the spirit
It awaits the moments when he is able to transform in conveyance to
change
When there is ever change

The heart is a conceptualist of breath
She, too, must sit near the walls of flesh
Captivated by the exterior of awaiting surprise
Unaware of its shape and form
Only dancing to the emotions of her God
Percussionist to the phantom music notes
that is carved into her breast
She only continues to pulse and be forthcoming in spirit
For it is all she knows
Upon discovering the plunge of a roller coaster, rain showers, and
anticipated, jovial fear
She would eagerly pack her bags and catch the next blue vein
out of this Californian desert of darkness and pink
Maybe it is only when she grasps loneliness - Being a Goddess of one
Does she stop believing in anyone else
And stops existing altogether

So to sigh is nothing
To change is something
Marching in place is a performance of boredom
Progression exists only in the minds of ignorance and satisfaction
Time continues on his own pace
He smiles and frowns as he should
Even the alterations in outfit is one of accustom to us
He may surprise our wandering eyes
And unmask the future today
We cling to our traditions strong
The slippery planks of a sinking ship
The fear of falling is all but fear
The body is all we know
To sigh is all we must do

As if we know no better...

UNTITLED

Amy Perry

Left standing on the bed after
completing the task I noticed the
shadow of my nude body pro-
jected on the wall before me. I
became fascinated by the fluid
movement of my form juxtaposed
against the rhythmic sev-
ering silhouette of the trees
blowing in the wind out side.

"Do you ever find something
extraordinarily beautiful in the
every day?" I asked my friend.
When the words escaped me, I
became aware that the gentle
gyrations of my motions, and
presence of the moonlight on my
skin would inform his answer.

"Only you" he chimed.

I melted down on to the bed
and into his embrace. "Do you
ever think you could forget me?"

"No", he replied without char-
acteristic hesitation and I smiled.

I outline his lips with the tip
of my finger nail. "With the pass-
ing of this night, it is one less day
we'll have to spend with one an-
other."

"It is one more day that I have
suffered through with you. One
more day that can never be sto-
len from me. Good night, mon
petit amie."

Sleep comes warmly now. I
fade entangled with him, confi-
dent in the knowledge that pass-
ing nights beacons bring morn-
ings.

THE HUMAN STAIN—A REVIEW

Nisha Feliz

On November 21, 2003, Dr. Darien and Dr. Bass had asked the last year's "Identity in America" class to come see the film *The Human Stain*. We had read the text in class last spring and were touched by the deep thoughts and issues voiced by its author, Philip Roth, brought up in the book of the same name.

The Human Stain is a story about the struggle of a man by the name of Coleman Silk to find his identity through life when two sides of his identity clash—the fact that he is black and that he is Jewish. All his life, Coleman Silk had lived the lie that he was "white" knowing that his origins were from the latter. He is a very distinguished and educated professor in a small college until one day he sees that he must quit his Classics job because of a discrimination charge bought against him for calling two of his students



The movie poster from
The Human Stain

Photo: www.imdb.com

"spooks" in class. He had called these students "spooks" not because they were 'blacks' but because they had not attended his class all semester.

This event changed his life forever: passing as a 'white' man condemned him to a world where words must be chosen carefully when addressing people. Further, the excitement had caused the

death of his ailing wife. Also, the event brought back painful memories of his adolescent years and finally, he had to come to terms with who he is and he did so through the help of a woman named Faunia Farley. He told her the truth and for that truth he was killed by Faunia's husband.

Nathan Zuckerman, the embodiment of Philip Roth, felt compelled to write a book based on the life of this man in order to convey to the audience the power of identity and the many sacrifices given to live up to that identity. The film, starring Anthony Hopkins and Nicole Kidman, portrayed the issues Philip Roth tried to convey in his book. It was action-packed with romance, drama, and philosophy. On a scale of five stars, I give *The Human Stain*, three.

SUBWAY

Samantha Young



"Excuse me, Patty, you're next."

Nearly as though she hasn't been looking at the sandwich boards for the twenty minutes she has been waiting in that bitch of a line, she holds up her index finger as she squints to see the pale green print on the bright yellow board. This woman comes in every single day during the busiest hour of the day to order a turkey sub with American cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, pickles and a liberal amount of mayonnaise on wholesome wheat bread. Yet, for some reason she insists upon staring confusedly at that damn board for a minute or two after it is her turn.

"Patty, you're holding up the line, can I just get you the regular?"

Sometimes I feel like I am talking to a mute. She only speaks above a murmur when absolutely necessary. When I urge her she looks up at me as though alarmed and utters something inaudible, but unmistakably crass. Someone behind her sighs, annoyed at her indifference, and she turns and glares at him with her bright, angry eyes. I almost can't bear to see her any more. I have often thought of resigning my green apron and surrendering my amicable visor to avoid an inevitable confrontation.

"Look, if you want your damn sandwich, please tell me what you want. Why do you do this every day?" Although I am speaking quietly so as not to arouse the other customers, the irritation in my voice is pointed and unmistakable.

"I simply need a moment to make sure I don't want something different today." Her voice is harsh and patronizing as it pounds into the core of my tolerance. I make at least 80 sandwiches every day, so there is no reason for me to know any of them! When Patty comes in I need to be prepared to make a turkey sub

with American cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, and a liberal amount of mayonnaise on wholesome wheat bread and deal with a great deal of emotional abuse. I really don't think I can take it any more. Her incessant stare and twitching mouth unnerve me so much I can barely cut the bread without removing a good portion of my left thumb.

"Is this some sort of a test? Why do you do this every day? Not only is your originality reflected in your taste, you insist upon making this line extend far beyond comprehension. Please, let me make your sub. Just say that you want the regular. I know what you like. Just say the word. Just please, don't do this every day."

"Look, I'm sorry if my indecisiveness causes the line to be a little backed up and I'm sorry you do not appreciate conservatism. Besides, today I actually feel like having something a little different, I think. Just give me one more second."

At least three people have stepped out of line and walked across the food court to McDonalds. I look over at those lucky souls in their maroon shirts with their short lines and I wonder why I am still standing behind this counter, by myself in this faded green. Not only does McDonalds have more than three people working at all times, they do not have this Patty. My brooding is being interrupted once again by her husky voice.

"Today I'm going to change it up and have a turkey sub with PROVOLONE cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, and a liberal amount of mayonnaise on that wholesome wheat bread you have there."

I have decided that this has been my last hour at this wonderful establishment. I am taking off my apron and calling it quits. I cannot

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KINDRED SPIRITS

Continued from Page 16

ship, and employment) offers numerous opportunities to interact with people and encounter new situations, as well as learn more about ourselves through these individuals and circumstances. Returning to a close friend at the end of the day helps to provide a distinct frame of reference to which many of our new perceptions may be compared, and thus better interpreted.

As different as they may be, siblings share the same roots for their diverging trees of life. Friends may come and go, but a sister or brother is always a part of us—an extension of ourselves to which we can return to reawaken our memories of the past and to discover facets of our true selves.

AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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and laughter. We all laugh, because the value of education has become the punch line. Do we want to change things, address the issues, and contemplate the problem? Perhaps, but it will take a hard work. Let's consider the cultural moment we are in; singers do not have to possess a voice or even a defined personality—they have to look attractive in rubber pants and not necessarily even have to lip sync to the beat. And do we want them to?

- (1) *Friends*, “The One With Rachel’s Other Sister,” (Season 9, Episode 8). Original Airdate: 11/21/02
Writer: Shana Goldberg-Meehan Director: Kevin S. Bright.
Originally, 26.8 million people watched and laughed at the mocking of educational achievement, as have at least 20 million more upon its two repeated broadcasts.
- (2) John Guillory, “Canon,” *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (eds.), 233-249.
- (3) “Stronger Accountability, Testing for Results: Helping Families, Schools and Communities Understand and Improve Student Achievement.” U.S. Department of Education. <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/testingforresults.html> [Accessed: 11/23/03].
- (4) David Owen, *None of the Above: Behind the Myth of Scholastic Aptitude*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986). The thesis of Owen’s book is that standardized tests are hopelessly flawed, most specifically the SATs, and completes the research to prove his assertions.
- (5) Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar,” *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, Paul Lauter, ed, (Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 2002), 1546.

NCHC

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discussions on a myriad of diverse topics. We discussed the difficulty of being a one-income family in today's society, dissertation research, experiences traveling abroad in Europe, what NY is like (the daughter from Kansas has her heart set on NYU for communications), and how staying at home with kids is harder work than going to the office. Aside from the brief uncomfortable moment when the woman from Kentucky turned to her husband the VP and

said, "Why don't you say things like that?" to my statement that taking care of the kids is hardest job in our household, the evening was an absolute joy. Our corner of the bar at Frontera Grill was filled with lively talk, shared food and drink, and people who used to be strangers.

In retrospect, the NCHC conference's theme of "Finding Common Ground" was not nearly as inane as I led you to believe at the outset of this article. The moments I prized most in Chicago,

those hours spent with newfound friends over dinner, were all about finding common ground. However, it is misleading to assume that common ground is something you stumbled upon like a penny on the sidewalk. It is something you have to look for and be receptive to seeing. Continuing to reside in a comfortable but insulated cocoon of your own existence will not lead you there. It is only by making efforts to discover it that it will be found at all.

The simple truth I learned at NCHC is that walking on common ground requires company. Common and solitary are antonyms. When you make the effort to find what you have in common with those around you, the positive feeling you get cannot help but be shared. To find this common ground, we need only do two things: 1) Ask more of others, and 2) ask more of ourselves.

SUBWAY

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take it any more. The woman has taunted me for the last time and she has officially beaten my apathy.

As I push through the swinging "Employees only" door I shoot one last glance at my nemesis, Patty.

I throw my visor and apron at her as I leave, saying, "I would almost put up with it if you didn't work here. Here, have my hours."

NCHC IN CHICAGO

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has been threatened by parents for teaching this aspect of biology.

We expected to teach others about our experience and education. By the end of the conference, it seemed that they had opened our eyes to the advantages we have, learning to appreciate our opportunities. We arrived at Chicago hoping to learn about others and we left with a new outlook and appreciation for different cultures. This trip ended up teaching us that which we cannot learn in books. We were lucky enough to perceive the world through the eyes of other's experiences.



end.